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All over the world, local citizens and communities are standing up to protect their ecological, social and economic interests against these invading entities that behave like thugs.

~ David Suzuki

ENOUGH! LIES & BULLYING

Somehow Canadians have allowed what is essentially an elected dictatorship to reverse decades of policies that were drawn from the well of political consensus.

~ Elizabeth May, MP

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Reference: Anti-Influenza virus activities of commercial oregano oils and their carriers. Journal of Applied Pharmaceutical Science 2012; 02(07) 214-18.

Avaaz.org – The world in action

Dear Avaazers:

Lately, we're not just winning; we're winning big.

These are not small time victories, but the biggest stuff, the save the world stuff – on climate change, Monsanto, our oceans, the Internet, democracy and more. There's a lot that's depressing in the world today, but scroll down and see what our future could look like if we just stick together...

Climate activists near the Trump Hotel in New York City, September 14. *Source IPCC*

After the March – Real progress on climate change

From Europe, the US, and China (One of our 2,600 climate marches)

We desperately needed Europe to kick off a global round of ambitious climate commitments at a recent summit in Brussels so I felt deflated when I was told by insiders there was "no way" the EU would stand up to big oil and coal to cut carbon emissions by "at least" 40% by 2030. But we didn't back down and they did it.

Here's how we got from "no way" to a big win: (https://secure.avaaz.org/en/eu_2030_climate_sam/) Drove the largest climate mobilisation in history with 675,000 people in the streets in 162 countries.

- Got the UN Secretary General, 18 cabinet ministers and countless politicians to join the march.
- Delivered a 2.2 million strong petition calling for 100% clean energy to world leaders including French President Hollande.
- Held advocacy meetings with the climate and energy ministers of France, Germany, Brazil and the UK.
- Lobbied Poland, a key blocker on climate action, with an ad campaign that got news coverage throughout Poland and phone calls from Polish Avaazers.
- Commissioned opinion polls in Germany, France, Poland and the UK right before the decision.

"The climate march was a game changer" was cited by president after president in their UN summit speeches. While hundreds of organizations contributed to the march and the win in Europe, our role was crucial. The BBC said, "The marches brought more people on to the streets than ever before, partly thanks to the organizational power of the e-campaign group Avaaz." Germany's Environment minister said, "I would like to thank the millions of people who have joined Avaaz... Without public support it will be impossible to stop climate change."

US President Obama also responded to the climate march, saying, "Our citizens keep marching. We cannot pretend we do not hear them." Following the momentum-building win in Europe, Obama met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Obama promised reasonable-sized cuts in emissions and China promised cuts as well, for the first time ever! The momentum we desperately needed has begun.

After big oil and coal, what's the next worst soulless corporate lobby? Yep, Monsanto. And that's the next big victory our community has helped win.

Monsanto's mega-plant killed

Protesting Monsanto's seed factory

When Monsanto tried to extend its grip over the global food chain with a massive new seed factory in Argentina, Avaaz members stood side by side with a local movement and stopped Latin America's largest GM seed plant from being built this year.

Monsanto is a $60 billion mega-corporation that plays dirty. Here's how we helped stop them:

- Launched a one million-strong petition and flooded the inboxes of decision makers with thousands of messages.
- Worked with top lawyers on a briefing that showed Monsanto's Environmental Assessment was illegal, making a splash in the media.
- Released a poll showing that two thirds of town residents opposed the plant.
- Supported local residents to build their power and a winning strategy.

Local grassroots leader Celina Molina said, "After more than a million Avaaz members stood with the people of Malvinas Argentinas, we won an important battle in the fight against Monsanto. From gaining access to documents previously denied to us by the authorities to running a game changing opinion poll, Avaaz was important for preventing the largest transgenic seed plant from being built in our backyard."

Big wins on saving our oceans, the Internet and democracy

Thanks to several thousand Avaazers who donate monthly to sustain our small team, we can work on several issues at once. Here are some other big wins in recent weeks:

The largest marine sanctuary in the world created: To support this critical reserve, over one million of us called on the US government; we commissioned an opinion poll in Hawaii and more. In the end, President Obama stood up to the big fishing lobbies and protected an area of the Pacific almost the size of South Africa.

Internet neutrality protected in Europe and the US: 1.1 million of us lobbied the EU parliament to protect the free and open Internet with strong rules on net neutrality. And against all the efforts of the big telecoms companies, we helped get the win. In the US, Obama recently followed suit and took a strong position to protect net neutrality that "stunned" the telecom companies.

Brazilian Congress ends secret voting: After several months of steady campaigning with call-ins, activist stunts, media attention and more, Avaazers in Brazil (now seven million strong) pressed the Congress to almost completely end the shady practice of "secret voting." It's a huge victory for one of the world's largest democracies.

These are the battles won, but they take months or years. Dozens of others are in the works. *continued p.28...*

common ground

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A NEW EARTH
Eckhart Tolle

I grew up in a totalitarian system where humour, political jokes, etc., were the only available responses to the insanity of the system. It was not because people were humorous, fun loving or funny. It was because they felt disempowered – powerless to take any action. Humour was their only refuge.

We can laugh at Harper all we want, ridicule him all we want – no harm in that whatsoever. But history teaches us that that simply doesn't get us anywhere.

Americans were laughing at George W. Bush for eight years. Everyone of a sane mind knew that the president was an idiot. But that didn't change anything, did it?

I'm not suggesting we promote negativity, doom and gloom and drama. I'm suggesting we get sober. I'm suggesting we realize that the people in power are criminally insane. And as long as they are in a position to affect the lives of others, there is nothing funny about it.

They are insane the same way any addict is insane – unconscious. In a sane society, they would receive compassionate, professional help – not ridicule.

Moreover, in a sane society, their actions would be considered dangerous, harmful and most likely criminal.

As for humour…

I simply don't understand what's funny about a profoundly sick individual such as Rob Ford being in a position of influence and power. His condition is not funny nor is the fact of how ridiculously blind and insane voters in Toronto must be to put such a person in a position of power.

Same goes for Harper.

Moreover, Harper is not important. Because today it is Harper… tomorrow it will be some other operative. What is important is the fact that Harper is only the reflection of what society is allowing to persist.

There is time for laughter, but when you are dealing with a criminally insane thug, there is also time to say, "Enough!"

That's where I'm coming from.

– Kris Kozak

A superfood holiday meal

Picture this! Instead of a dinner that leaves you and your guests overweight and over-stuffed, you can enjoy a superbly satisfying *and* healthful celebration meal. A holiday can be an opportunity to introduce delicious options to family and friends as part of the feast or as the main event. If you are a guest, bring a fabulous dish to share.

A number of North American health organizations – the Institute of Medicine and the FAO of the United Nations – collaborated to rate foods on nutrient density. Some are designated as powerhouse foods, providing, on average, at least 10% of recommended intakes per 100 calories for key nutrients of public health importance. The nutrients include iron, zinc, potassium, B vitamins (thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folate and B6) and vitamins A (as carotenoids), C, E and K.

The powerhouse items – all plant foods – also contain a wealth of phytochemicals linked with reduced risk of chronic disease such as heart disease and cancer. Whereas turkey is an entree that entirely lacks phytochemicals, your meal is rich in these protective substances. Your taste buds will be happy too.

Powerhouse foods include winter squash, kale, other leafy greens, Brussels sprouts, turnips, carrots, pumpkin and citrus. These can feature in a meal that is satisfying, delicious and beautiful. Add salad (lettuce and berries), seasoned and baked tofu, gravy, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.

Here is a beautiful addition to a holiday table:

Kale and red pepper holiday wreath

Makes about 5 1/2 cups

From *Cooking Vegetarian* by Vesanto Melina RD and chef Joseph Forest (Harper Collins 2011).

The deep green kale, tossed with pieces of bright red bell pepper, provides a rich source of calcium, iron, potassium, the antioxidant vitamins A, C, and E, and omega 3 fatty acids. For a larger wreath, double the recipe.

12 cups kale, stem removed and thinly sliced, packed
3 tablespoons flaxseed or extra virgin olive oil
4 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
4 teaspoons tamari, Braggs, or soy sauce
1/2 cup diced sweet red pepper

Place kale in a steamer, cover and steam over medium-high heat until the kale is soft to the bite. Drain in a colander and squeeze out any excess water. Combine the oil, vinegar and tamari in a large bowl. Add the kale; toss to coat the leaves with dressing. Arrange on a warm platter to create a round wreath shape, leaving a clean open space in the centre. Sprinkle with red pepper and serve.

Another recipe, Sensational Stuffed Squash, was listed in our December column in 2013: http://commonground.ca/2013/12/gluten-free-celebration/ Use a winter squash (Hubbard, butternut, acorn, kabocha or turban) that weights about 5 lbs. The Quinoa Stuffing is gluten free so many guests will welcome it.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian based in Langley and co-author of the award winning **Becoming Vegan: Express Edition** and **Comprehensive Edition.**

December 14 & 20: Vesanto invites you to afternoon showings of **Cowspiracy** (December 14) and **Speciesism** (Dec 20). Email vesanto.melina@gmail.com

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Staying healthy on a polluted planet

by Yarrow Willard

photo © Marilyn Barbone

We live in an age where environmental pollutants and synthetic chemicals surround us and innumerable websites and documentaries document the severity of the trajectory and ramifications of our current actions. Toxicity of the planet is by far the major issue of our time, eclipsing that of economic downturns and other such issues, all of which points to a call to action.

There are many solutions on the horizon and new innovations pop up daily yet many of us still feel powerless and overwhelmed. It is important to direct our passion to something we can control and easily influence: ourselves. When we are actively fortifying our bodies and cleansing them of environmental toxins, we are engaging in the solution. Let's take a look at how we can get resilient on a polluted planet.

Essentially, our bodies and everything in the universe are created in polar cycles of ebb and flow, wax and wane, yin and yang. Just like breathing, everything cycles back into itself as a form of rise and decline. This means we have a great ability to build, though, inevitably, the cycle of destruction will come. On a societal level, after years of growth, we are now seeing aspects of our socio-economic structures declining. On other levels, this cycle is happening in every second, every day and every year. We have to learn how to maximize these cycles to find effective ways to fortify our bodies and eliminate what doesn't serve us. Getting our intentions and actions in flow with the grand design – just like the Karate Kid – we need a little bit of "wax on, wax off." Or as we say in herbal medicine, «Cleanse a little, build a little.»

Cleansing

The first thing I often suggest is a spring and fall cleanse. These are nature's transition seasons and are ideal for maximizing the cleansing process. A cleanse should include a dietary protocol without foods that feed pathogens – simple carbs, sugars, flours, tropical fruit, juices, etc. – mostly consisting of alkaline or neutral whole foods, coupled with herbs or supplements to help tone the internal organs and move toxins out of the body. The idea is to create a heath reset for about two to four weeks. This will help us shed the toxic load we have built up over the year.

Eliminatory channels

To protect ourselves when faced with toxins and pollution, we must eliminate them upon exposure. Elimination is done through four major channels in the body: the colon, kidneys, skin and lungs. If one of these becomes congested, the others must work harder. A good example of this is when we see people with what looks like bad skin; in actuality, their skin may be the best organ they have for elimination. The holistic approach in this case would be to work on the liver, kidneys and colon in order to get them taking some of the load. In order for the body to be truly effective when a real threat comes along, we need to have all four channels working well. Let's take a deeper look at ways to do this.

The colon

The colon and digestive tract are the most bio-diverse regions of the body, with all sorts of organisms hanging out there. Humans have untold more organisms living within and on the body than they have cells. Essentially, we are built like a rainforest of biodiversity. Many of these help us digest our food and protect us, working as our immune system's primary defensive strategy and helping us be more adaptable to extreme conditions. However, many organisms can steal our nutrients, cause inflammation, fermentation, membrane permeability and more. Pathogenic imbalances of such organisms create major imbalances in the body, leading to a cascade of health issues. Shifting to a cleansing diet can help change the internal ecology, making it harder for these types of organisms to survive. Strengthening the bio-diversity of the good organisms with a healthy dose of pre and pro-biotic foods can also help keep the ecological balance in check.

Sometimes, a little supplementation is helpful. For the colon, clays and minerals can be used to pull out toxins and pathogens. Some examples are bentonite and zeolite clay, diatomaceous earth, shilajit or activated charcoal. Insoluble fibres such as ground flax and seaweeds, fermented foods and aloe vera juice can be incorporated as well. Some colon cleansing and good laxative herbs are cascara, yellow dock, buckthorn and Oregon grape. Some upper digestive system inflammation and gas-reducing herbs are fennel, fenugreek, meadowsweet, marshmallow and slippery elm. If there are parasites or major pathogens, a more rigorous and specific regime may be called for to get the system back into balance and functioning optimally.

Kidneys

Our kidneys are the main filtration centres of the body and are constantly being called to action – especially when a pollutant enters the body. As they sit right bellow the adrenals, they are quite sensitive to stress. Reducing an over-firing stress response will help with kidney health. This can prove hard in the modern era as many of us see stress as a precursor to our success. However, with a little meditation, grounding, and clear focused energy, stress urgency can be overcome. When it comes to our resilience, the stress response can systemically weaken every system in the body, including the kidneys – it can be a major issue. Kidney support protocols include the reduction of stimulating diuretics like caffeine and alcohol and the addition of PH neutral to alkaline foods and herbals that strengthen these pathways. Some good kidney herbs are juniper, *uva-ursi*, dandelion, corn silk, cleavers, marshmallow, gravel root and cranberry. It can also be a good idea to work on the liver at the same time to increase effective elimination.

Skin

The skin is our largest eliminatory organ and one of the most effective ways of moving toxic loads out of the body. We absorb much of what we touch so the skin can be one of the chinks in our protective armour. One of the most effective ways to get the skin working for us is through regular sweating, although repeated hot then

cold therapy is even better, giving the skin a real work out. A shower is an easy way to do this, ideally finishing on cold, closing down the pores. It may seem like a shock to the system, but I can promise you it will feel better afterward.

Detox baths are another great way to pull out toxins. A favourite at our house is to use 1/2 cup mineral salts, 1/4 cup bentonite and 1/4 cup baking soda mixed in water and added to the bath. We also like to add essential oils and seaweeds or kelp powder to these baths. As seaweeds are mostly alginates, they are ideal for pulling out toxin load. Many are great used directly on the skin or internally. Regular dry skin brushing to invigorate the tissues and remove dead cells can also be very supportive. To help strengthen the skin, apply good oils after bathing. Some examples are avocado, vitamin E, jojoba and coconut oil. Powerful, protective oils like sea buckthorn, argan and tamanu may be added as well.

Lungs

The lungs are similar to the skin in that they are a way in and out of the body for toxins so they need both cleansing and building. Other than CO2, the main way they eliminate toxins from the body is through mucous production. This means the common cold can actually be a very effective way to push deep-seated toxins to the surface for elimination, provided we encourage it to run its course rather than pushing it away with antibiotics and painkillers. To strengthen and tone the lungs, we need to create deep breathing practices. Both regular aerobic activity and purposeful breathing meditations can help achieve this. Eating spicy foods also strengthens the lungs as does reducing mucous forming foods such as dairy and flour. Herbal protocols are helpful as well; elecampane is my herb of choice for deep lung toning, but there are many others such as cherry bark, horehound, osha, usnea, coltsfoot, mullein and reishi.

Other dietary supplements and suggestions to help build resilience:

- Reducing the use of additives, preservatives, colourings, synthetic compounds and plastic packaging.
- Sea vegetables are helpful in protecting the thyroid and endocrine system and other mineral needs. They also contain large amounts of alginates that draw radiation and other toxins out of the body.
- Medicinal mushrooms are helpful in educating the immune system and assist in whole body system harmony.
- Tonic herbs: Ginseng, eleuthro, goji, ashwagandha, rhodiola, holy basil, nettles, dandelion, burdock, pine pollen and others are helpful in stress management and optimal body functioning.
- Super greens such as spirulina, chlorella, moringa, alfalfa and wheatgrass help to pull out toxic load and alkalize the PH.

Finally, if we are to take a real stance in being resilient against pollution, we must acknowledge its many levels. This means protecting ourselves from mental, emotional and spiritual pollution as well. Much of the new edge science is proving that what we think and feel are as important to our overall immunity as what we ingest physically. Stress, fear and dis-empowerment lead to many modern day

To protect ourselves when faced with toxins and pollution, we must eliminate them upon exposure.

health issues. Those who maintain loving relationships and a strong community and create time for self-care are more successful and adaptable when major issues arise.

From a place of intentional action, it is quite possible to be healthy, vital and protected in an increasingly toxic world. When we gather the right tools and allies and learn how to maximize the waves of the natural cycles, we become active in creating good health – both internally and externally. In this way, our healthy lifestyle choices empower those around us as well as future generations to take up the call to action as well.

Yarrow Willard is a clinical/master herbalist and co-owner/formulator of Harmonic Arts Botanical Dispensary based in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island. Raised with a strong connection to herbs and natural health by two herbalist parents, he is a passionate promoter of plant-based medicine and nutrition. www.harmonicarts.ca

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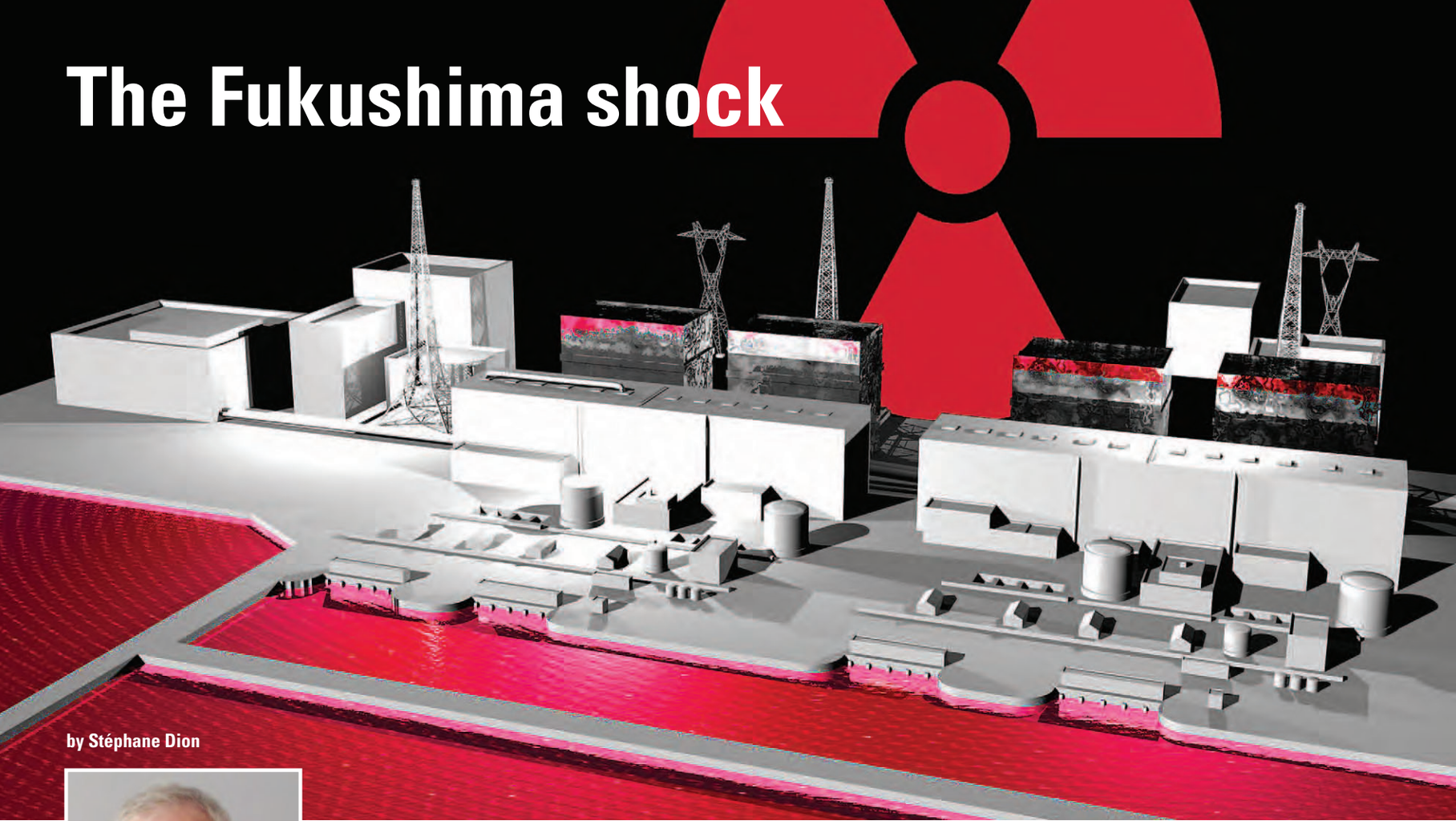
The Fukushima shock



Fukashima image © Vampy1

by Stéphane Dion

The Honourable Stéphane Dion has been a Member of Canada's Parliament, representing the Montreal riding of Saint-Laurent – Cartierville since 1996. During that period, he held various Cabinet portfolios. From 2004 to 2005, he was Minister of the Environment and as such, was instrumental in securing one of the greenest budgets in the history of Canada. In 2005, as Chair of the eleventh United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP-11), held in Montreal, he contributed to the rescue of the Kyoto Protocol. In 2006, he was elected as Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada and thus became Leader of the Official Opposition in the House of Commons. In the 2008 election, he proposed a visionary plan to green Canada's economy and strengthen the fight against climate change: the Green Shift.

Seeing Fukushima's evacuated area is quite a shock. It is one thing to imagine it, another to see the consequences of the nuclear disaster with your own eyes.

Imagine your home, your car, your property and your neighbourhood suddenly becoming forbidden areas. You are not allowed to go there except perhaps for an hour or two, from time to time. Although the surrounding woods are as green and the ocean as blue as ever, an invisible blanket of death covers everything. You can't feel it, you can't smell it but it is there and will be for decades, perhaps longer.

Going back home would put your health at risk. You are not even sure you escaped the danger zone in time. You fear for your family's as well as your own health. The specter of cancer haunts you constantly. What does the future hold for you? Leukemia? Thyroid cancer? A deformed baby?

If you are allowed to stay home – because your neighbourhood is deemed to be distant enough from the danger zone – you are warned to not let your children play outdoors. Arenas are being built and designated for that purpose.

Your daughter is heartbroken: she was going to marry a young man from another area, but the wedding has been cancelled – an irradiated mother-to-be is not wanted.

You are a farmer, but are not allowed to sell your produce, now unfit for human consumption.

You are a fisherman, but the area where you once cast your nets is now banned.

Those are but a few of the multiple aspects of the nightmare being lived by the denizens of Fukushima Prefecture, Northern Japan. On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9 earthquake triggered a huge tsunami that threw 15-metre waves at the region, claiming 1,599 lives, destroying everything in its path and causing a nuclear accident of a magnitude unequalled since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Three reactors suffered a catastrophic meltdown and a fourth was damaged, spewing radiation in the atmosphere and ocean and contaminating a 30,000-square-kilometre area – 8% of Japan's total land area. As a result of that nuclear disaster, 300,000 Fukushima Prefecture residents were evacuated; 130,000 are still forbidden to go home.

> Yet even in adversity, humour – or, at least, bitter irony – finds its place. Some Japanese will tell you the story of the TEPCO scientist who, in an attempt to reassure the population, went as far as to declare: "Smiling people are not affected by radiation. Only worried people are. That has been proved in animal testing."

I met some of those families while in Japan from September 30 to October 8, 2014, when I was invited by the Swiss section of the Green Cross to take stock of the consequences of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The Green Cross was founded in 1993 by Mikhail Gorbachev following the Rio Summit. It is active in some 30 countries and one of its many noteworthy features is the attention it pays to environmental safety and security – including victims of nuclear accidents. The Green Cross is very involved in Fukushima, helping the displaced families as best it can.

The Swiss section of the Green Cross gathered some 30 environmentalists and political figures from America, Europe and Asia to study the consequences of the Fukushima disaster. We travelled to a section of the evacuated area, the *Resident Restriction Zone*, taking all necessary precautions. The most dangerous area, the *No Return Zone*, cannot be visited – no decontamination has been done there. On a supposedly decontaminated street in the small town of Tomioka, we were told to get back on the bus after 10 minutes because the radiation level was too high. We visited abandoned houses and businesses and witnessed the ongoing decontamination work, which employs five to six thousand workers every day.

photo © Mike K.

Anti-Nuclear protests in Fukushima, Japan

Safety and security rules are two to five times stricter than those put in place by the Russian, Bielorussian and Ukrainian authorities following the Chernobyl accident. Cancer cases have been identified, but direct causal links with the nuclear accident may not even be identifiable before 2016.

The scientists who spoke to us about the health impacts of radiation are not all of the same mind on the issue, even though these impacts have been studied since the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. But assuming we accept their most optimistic assessments, what does it change? Even if you are told the radiation might be less harmful, less likely to induce cancer in the long term than what had previously been believed, would you wholeheartedly accept to live in an irradiated region?

When the authorities distribute pamphlets in schools explaining that radiation is not that much of a problem, they raise more controversy than they provide reassurance. So people seek information on their own. They talk about the relative harmfulness of caesium 137, cobalt 60, plutonium 239, strontium 90 – however, as it stands, psychosocial impacts have killed more people than radiation: some 1,660 lives have been lost to post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic anxiety, depression, family dislocation, precarious living conditions, displacement and suicide resulting from evacuation.

We met with the Fukushima region local authorities and Members of Parliament from the ruling party in Tokyo. We were told about the measures that have been taken to help and compensate displaced persons and to carry out food and drinking water inspection, site decontamination, radiation level monitoring and management of fast accumulating radioactive wastes and contaminated soil.

The cooling water used in the Daiichi plant reactors needs to be stored somewhere. It is estimated that if all goes well, some 30 years will be needed to remove the radioactive fuel from the reactors. In the meantime, a way must be found to prevent the fuel from leaking again into the ground and ocean. All that calls for highly trained personnel and huge expenses including, paradoxically, for electrical power. But to what avail? Some municipal representatives told us the technology is not up to par and that radioactive leaks continue to happen, contaminating the Pacific Ocean waters and fish stocks. Interim solutions are still being applied to a problem that will be around for decades and risks affecting many neighbouring populations in Japan and elsewhere.

Following the Fukushima accident, Japan shut down its 54 nuclear reactors. These accounted for over a quarter (29%) of Japan's electrical power production. This energy source had to be replaced with wind and solar energy, but above all, by imported hydrocarbons – natural gas and coal. A consequence of this increased reliance on hydrocarbons is that Japan, which had committed to a 25% *reduction* of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels, now forecasts a 3% *increase*. The Members of Parliament I met told me the Japanese Government will not commit to a new reduction target for 2030 until the future of nuclear energy is settled.

It costs almost as much to keep the nuclear plants dormant as when they were running. For the time being, the government is thinking of restarting two nuclear reactors in Southern Japan, based on what it believes to be an extremely prudent and thorough scientific assessment. But quite understandably, that perspective raises much resistance and apprehension in the population.

One of the most unfortunate consequences of the Fukushima disaster is a weakening, in a large segment of Japan's population, of the trust between the people and their government. The Japanese appeared to me as I imagined them: smiling, courteous, hardworking, inventive, disciplined and very respectful of authority. Historically, in previous occurrences of the type of natural disaster that regularly strikes the country – typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions – they have viewed the government as a protective father or mother figure. But after the Fukushima nuclear accident, for the first time, the government's good faith has been cast into doubt. Hadn't it promised such an accident would never happen?

The failures of Japan's Nuclear Safety Commission and the now proven falsifications perpetrated by the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) – owner of the power plant – have been pointed out. To avert a panic, the government kept making reassuring statements, which were cast into doubt and perceived as a form of manipulation, generating a feeling of resentment and bitterness that is still very strong today.

Yet even in adversity, humour – or, at least, bitter irony – finds its place. Some Japanese will tell you the story of the TEPCO scientist who, in an attempt to reassure the population, went as far as to declare: "Smiling people are not affected by radiation. Only worried people are. That has been proved in animal testing."

It would be hard to find a country that combines, better than Japan, strong organization skills, individual and collective discipline, social cohesion and technological expertise. Japan thought it was immune to nuclear disaster. Yet it happened, albeit as a result of an unprecedented natural disaster. What country can feel assured that it would have dealt better with the consequences of such a crisis than Japan? When you think that some much less organized or politically stable countries than Japan also want their own nuclear plants, how can you not think we are rolling the dice? Explosive dice!

Fukushima is here to testify to the damage an overly reckless humankind can inflict on itself. Will we know how to draw the right conclusions?

Medication civil disobedience

One of the first duties of the physician is to educate the masses not to take medicine. – Dr. William Osler

You may have heard about Stanley Milgram, the American psychologist who carried out some of the most infamous research on obedience back in the 1960s, but have you heard of the psychiatrist Charles K. Hofling?

Hofling carried out a very interesting hospital-based experiment in 1966, in which hospital nurses were given orders by an unknown doctor to administer a potentially life-threatening dose of a drug to a particular patient. The fake doctor phoned the nurse on night duty and told her to administer 20 mg of "Astroten" – a fake drug – to a patient, promising he would drop by later for the required signature. A bottle of "Astroten" was in the drug cabinet with its label clearly stating that 10 mg was the maximum daily dose.

The result? Twenty-one out of the 22 nurses were prepared to give the patient the Astroten as ordered and actually had to be prevented from doing so during the experiment. Like Milgram's experiments, Hofling showed that even when people have strong reasons to question authority – such as being asked to deliver a potentially lethal drug– they often won't question the orders they received. You likely wouldn't get the same result today, but undoubtedly one stark fact remains: the authority of doctors or specialists over nurses and patients can seem invincible.

While Milgram and Hofling's experiments have been criticized for cruelly tricking people into following orders, they are incredibly insightful, showing that many of us are hard-wired to *not* question or disobey authority. After all, "just following orders" is the oldest excuse in the world to explain away bad behaviour, even that of Nazis and those who carried out atrocities on an industrial scale.

In the modern world of pharmaceutical consumption, complying with authority – following a doctor's prescription, for example – is considered one of the highest duties of a patient. Despite all the new-age assurances around "informed consent" and "doctor-patient collaboration," we still live in a world where expecting and rewarding obedience endure and thrive.

Patients who are 'non-adherent' to their doctors' orders do so at the risk of souring their good relationship with their GPs. Healthcare professionals understandably expect compliance from patients because they believe that not listening to good medical advice could be risky. Yet in the prescribing world, how big and how bad is this problem?

"Medication non-adherence is truly an epidemic," according to Mary De Vera, a pharmacoepidemiologist and assistant professor in the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at UBC. Last summer, she was awarded a university position funded by AbbVie, a major pharmaceutical company.

The "Professorship in Medication Adherence" focuses on, as far as I can tell, the problem of disobedient patients; this is a head scratcher worthy of being filed in the "truth is stranger than fiction" file. What's clear to me is that Big Pharma's business model depends on drug sales so they must do their best to squash disobedience. After all, disobedient patients who won't buy their products are bad for business.

There are certainly times when refusing a prescription may be fatal – getting bitten by a poisonous snake and refusing the antidote or having an asthma attack and refusing a bronchodilator, for example – but the vast majority of prescription drugs don't fall into that category.

Clearly, not adhering to your doctor's script is wasteful from an economic point of view. As a patient, if you get a prescription from your doctor, pay for it, but then don't take it, you're wasting your doctor's time and the drug insurer's and your money. You

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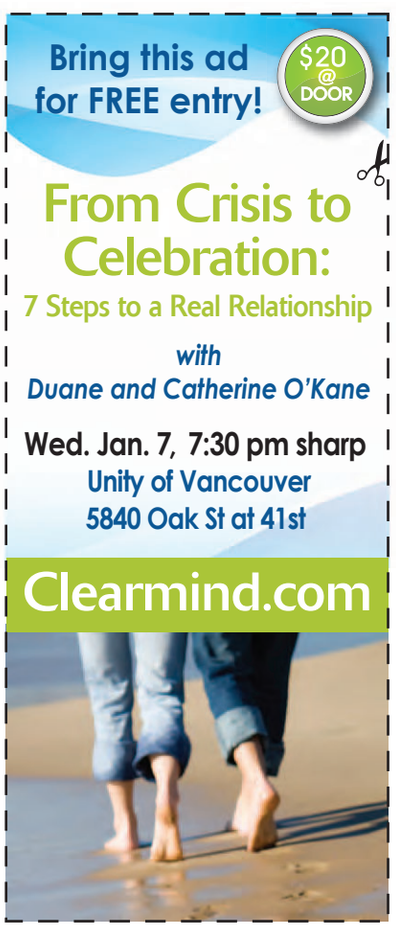

might also be missing out on something that works to deal with your health complaint.

Dr. De Vera maintains that "non-adherence is a leading cause of preventable morbidity, mortality and cost," but I would beg to differ. As Peter Gotzsche so colourfully outlines in his book *Deadly Medicines and Organized Crime*, prescription drugs are the third leading cause of death so how could refusing prescribed drugs be a leading cause of dying or getting sick?

But that's the line the drug industry and its surrogates like to peddle. One of my colleagues has a good counter to this. He pointed to the arthritis drug Vioxx – likely 150,000 dead after three years on the market – and said, "Nobody died by not taking Vioxx." How true. Now substitute Prepulsid, Bextra, Baycol, Rezulin (etc.) and dozens of pharmaceuticals removed from the market in the last decade because of their propensity to kill and this 'medication non-adherence' crusade seems almost preposterous.

The theme of "non-adherence" isn't a sentiment that would sit well with the doctors I know because they've been raised drinking a different Kool-Aid where "shared decision making" rules. Instead of 'non-adherence,' progressive doctors are now talking about "minimally disruptive medicine" and ways to rationalize and reduce peoples' prescription regimes because they are aware of one indisputable fact: more drugs often lead to more harm.

I looked for research to see if it was harmful to patients if they did not adhere to their prescriptions, but there is very little information available. A recent systematic review by the Cochrane Collaboration found that, even though only about half of all patients take their medication as prescribed, there was scant evidence

t's about reminding yourself that sometimes you have to be the first one to say "enough is enough.

to show that this made much of a difference. Only five of 180 studies on how to improve "adherence rates" could show any improvements in health outcomes for patients. As the authors noted, "Even the most effective interventions did not lead to large improvements in adherence and treatment outcomes."

While it seems the pharmaceutical industry's "take-your-meds" approach is working under the 1950s banner of "Father knows best," a noticeable countermovement called "de-prescribing" is starting to emerge. Because the problem of excessive medication use in the elderly is becoming more and more known, efforts to 'deprescribe' – especially among the overdrugged and frail elderly – are expanding. New educational programs and tools are springing up all over the place to help doctors recognize and act on the problems related to polypharmacy (multiple drug prescriptions) and to try and reduce the potential harm related to all those drugs.

Doctors are starting to recognize that the more drugs you take, the more problems such as drug-to-drug interactions, errors and serious adverse drug reactions you are likely to have. This means – especially in older people – more falls, confusion, delirium and otherwise feeling sicker. One of the biggest reasons many seniors end up in hospitals – and have prolonged stays there – is that they have actually taken the dozens of drugs as prescribed, probably from multiple doctors. As foolish and as crazy as it sounds, many of those drugs were given to deal with the side effects of drugs the patient is already taking!

Even though doctors are starting to work to reduce the risk of polypharmacy, we can all be involved. Here's one suggestion for seniors and those who care for them. Try taking this line for a test-drive: "Doctor, I don't want to take all these drugs because they make me feel bad – weak, dizzy, confused, restless, etc. Can you do a trial on me and cut out those drugs that are not essential to keep me alive or which control my symptoms? Can you help me do this?"

No reasonable doctor will refuse this request, if you ask nicely. This is not being disobedient to your doctor's orders. It's not about being "non adherent." It's about reminding yourself that sometimes you have to be the first one to say, "enough is enough."

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher in Victoria. He is currently working with other researchers in BC and across Canada to develop and test deprescribing tools. Follow him on twitter @akecassels or read his other writings at www.alancassels.com

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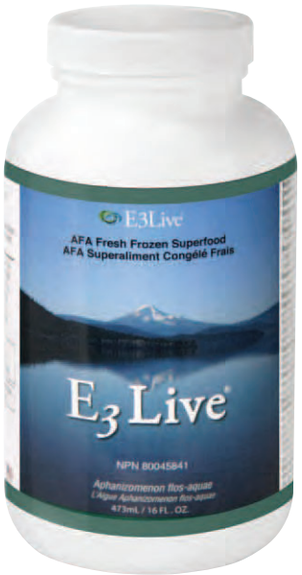

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Universe Within Gwen Randall-Young **PSYCHOLOGY**

Relationship barriers

"Find the love you seek by first finding the love within yourself. Learn to rest in that place within you that is your true home. – Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

I often work with individuals who have a history of not being respected or who were even treated badly in relationships. And not just in couples' relationships – it can also happen with friends or in the workplace.

Almost always when I explore the client's history, I find childhood experiences that are mirrored in present day relationships. It may be parents who treated them badly or simply did not validate them or give love. Sometimes, there is a history of being bullied in school. The result is an individual who devalues himself. There may be a strong inner critic who constantly berates, second-guesses or is overly concerned with what others think.

Interestingly, some of these people can be highly successful in their careers. It is like the inner wise adult soldiers on while the vulnerable inner child hides in a dark corner. Even so, the inner, devalued child has an impact. Some very successful people suffer from what is known as the "imposter syndrome." They believe they are not as good as others believe they are and one day their inadequacies will be revealed.

> We tend to attract others who will treat us as we treat ourselves.

The child who was devalued by others now devalues the self and the inner child gets triggered in adult relationships. The person reacts with the feelings of the child, not the wise adult. If one wants to go to a movie, and the other refuses the invitation, the wise adult says: "Okay, maybe another time." The inner child says or thinks, "If you really loved me you would go with me." It takes the refusal of the other as a rejection.

In effect, the person recreates in the adult relationship similar dynamics he experienced as a child. This can happen in two ways. One way is attracting people who treat them the way they were treated when they were young.

The other way is to project onto the other their own thoughts and motivations. For example, if he chooses to spend an evening with his friends, she feels he values his friends more than her, due to her own insecurities. She makes him responsible for her feelings of adequacy since she cannot do that for herself. A dysfunctional process of attack and defence begins. The relationship can never be healthy without two whole individuals.

Consequently, the person may keep ending relationships and looking for others to make her feel whole. Being unaware, the situation is interpreted as "Others keep treating me badly" and a history of bad relationships unfolds.

Sometimes, one actually is being treated badly and not just projecting feelings of being devalued. Sadly, we tend to attract others who will treat us as we treat ourselves. If we do not truly love, honour and respect ourselves, it is hard to attract someone who does.

The person who does not value the self and looks for that from others will stay too long in truly bad relationships. Their need for love and approval supersedes the need to honour themselves by getting out. One who has worked to heal the pain of the past and learned to truly love and honour the self will move away from dishonouring relationships much more quickly.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, Deep Powerful Change Hypnosis CDs and new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca

Just now an interview with Eckhart Tolle

To read Eckhart Tolle's latest column, please see the current print edition of Common Ground. For copyright reasons, we are authorized to publish this column in our print version only.

JR: In your new book, I feel like you're the modern equivalent of the explorers that came to the new world, but an explorer and documenter of consciousness, discovering a new world.

ET: Yes, discovering is the right word. It's not that you need to make a great effort to attain it or bring it about or acquire it. It's discovering it's already there in you – conscious awareness that's obscured, or partially obscured, in many people. It's a discovery of something already there.

It's like waking up after a dream, because identification with the thinking mind and its stories and the old emotional conditioning is like being immersed in a kind of dream world, which very often turns into a nightmare – acting out old conditioned patterns again and again. The whole structure of the egoic mind is an old dysfunction.

There's some evidence that the ego started about 6,000 years ago, but nobody can say for sure. Before that, humans were in a state of innocence. When we go beyond the dysfunction of the ego, we regain our original innocence, but on a much deeper level. This is why Jesus said unless we become as little children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, returning to the original innocence, and at the same time going much deeper into that with full awareness – that's the process. We're coming out of thousands of years of dreadful suffering, almost the whole of recorded history of humanity. If you really look at it in an unbiased way, as if you'd never seen it before, one cannot but admit that, to a large extent, 80 to 90 percent of it is a history of pathological insanity, the suffering that humans have created for themselves and, of course, inflicting it upon others.

JR: And exporting it through colonization to the new world.

ET: Yes, so the important part of the awakening process is the realization of the insanity in human history, collectively, to this day playing itself out in world events. Also, to be aware of the insanity within oneself – old, dysfunctional patterns that come again and again that create suffering. So when you see that you're insane, then you're not completely insane. Sanity comes the moment you realize the fact of insanity. To see insanity is not a negative thing.

JR: At least you're out of denial.

ET: Yes, that's why in the film A Beautiful Mind, for example, which is about a mathematical genius who did have a mental dysfunction, his mind was developed in certain areas but he was also insane. The viewer of the film doesn't know that until a certain point when the character realizes that many of his experiences are delusions. At that moment, his healing begins. He's not cured yet, but his healing begins because he's recognized his own insanity. That recognition can only come out of sanity, which is the awareness of unconditioned consciousness.

JR: I remember you saying before you published your last book that the next one would be about why there isn't peace on this planet. Was finding a solution one of the major intentions of A New Earth?

ET: Yes, to see the nature of the major dysfunction. That's why I talk quite a bit about the ego in this book. We need to recognize the nature of the dysfunction. Sometimes, even very great Eastern teachers sometimes neglect that part because they're not really touched by the magnitude of, especially, the Western ego. So it's very important for us to see the dysfunction so that we can recognize it when it arises.

Part of the new book is about recognizing the ego, which I regard as a semi-autonomous energy. It's an energy field. Every thought you think is an energy field. It has a form and then it dissolves and then there is another form. The ego itself is an energy field and it has a collective and individual aspect.

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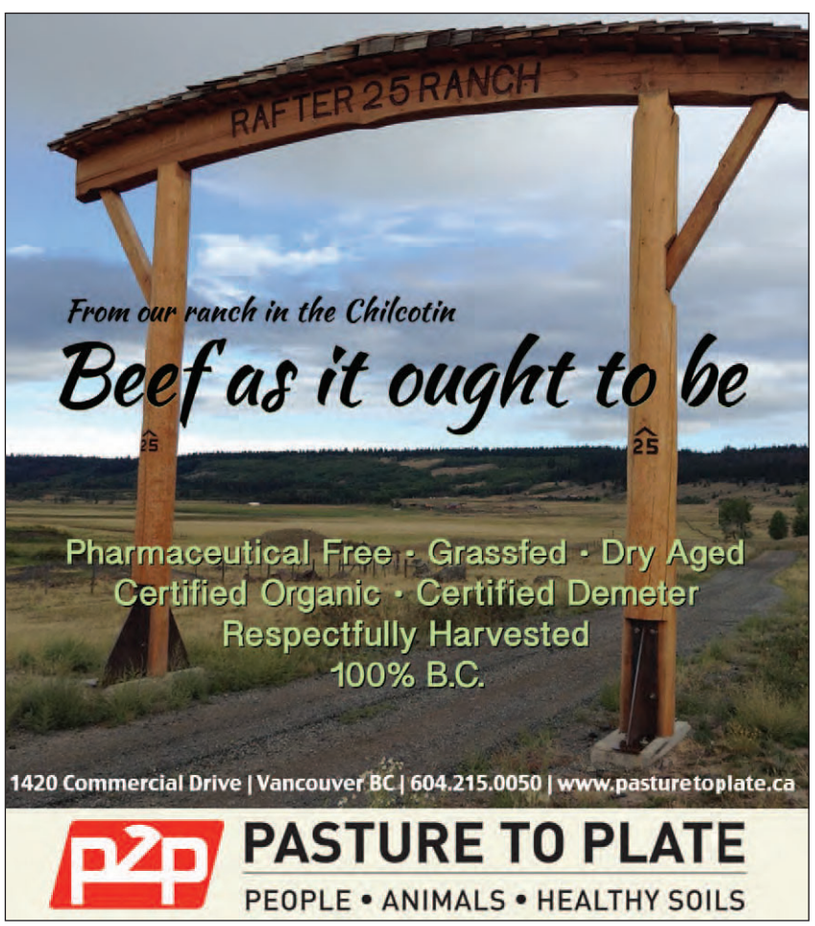
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Move Canada forward

Vote together. Defeat Harper.

by Jolan Bailey, Leadnow Vancouver organizer

Leadnow (www.leadnow.ca) is an independent advocacy organization that runs campaigns on the major issues of our time, engages people in participatory decision-making and organizes in communities across Canada. The organization envisions a country where people work together to build an open democracy, create a fair economy and ensure a safe climate for all generations. It's been just over three years since 3,000 people from all across Canada came together before the 2011 election and began building the leadnow.ca campaigning community. People become part of this community by taking part in campaigns to defend our democracy and hold governments accountable to the values of a majority of people across Canada.

Do you remember how you felt after the last federal election when you heard the news the Harper Conservatives had won a majority government?

I felt like I'd been punched in the stomach. How could a seemingly progressive country like Canada elect a government that slashes budgets and is dead-set on becoming a dirty oil superpower?

It happened because of vote-splitting in our broken first-past-the-post voting system. Even though a majority voted for a new government against the Conservatives, their votes were split between the Liberals, the NDP and Greens. And because of our electoral system, this handed the Conservatives 100% of the power, with less than 39% of the vote.

> The fate of the Harper Government will come down to a few dozen swing ridings where the outcome could be decided by a few hundred votes. If the vote splits in these key ridings, we could face four more years of Harper.

The call for cooperation

Like me, a lot of people across the country were outraged. More than 55,000 people signed a Leadnow petition urging opposition parties to cooperate in ridings where Conservatives won because of vote-splitting and to then pass electoral reform.

The idea of formal cross-party cooperation to defeat the Conservatives has been a contested topic among opposition parties. Despite various levels of commitment to cooperation and electoral reform from opposition leaders, both NDP leader Thomas Mulcair and Liberal leader Justin Trudeau have committed to going alone in the next election. It's now up to voters to take matters into our own hands.

It's up to us to make sure we get the progressive government that we want – a government that's committed to fighting climate change, investing in a fair economy and improving our democratic institutions.

What will happen in 2015?

Now, the 2015 election is just around the corner and despite their record, the Conservatives could win again.

The fate of the Harper Government will come down to a few dozen swing ridings where the outcome could be decided by a few hundred votes. If the vote splits in these key ridings, we could face four more years of Harper.

Vote together. Defeat Harper. Move Canada forward

Leadnow just launched a three-step campaign to unite progressive voters across party lines to defeat the Conservatives in 2015.

Step one: Build a bloc of voters

Leadnow is building a bloc of voters who commit to working across party lines to defeat the Conservatives by collecting signatures on a pledge. More than 10,000 voters have already signed the online pledge to Vote Together and volunteer teams are forming across the country to collect pledges with a door-to-door campaign.

Step two: Focus support behind the best candidates who can defeat Conservatives

As more people in a riding sign the pledge, Leadnow will focus more resources into helping voters in the riding unite behind one candidate.

If 1,500 people sign the pledge in a riding, Leadnow will commission a poll to find out which candidates have the best shot at defeating the Conservative. The results of the poll will be reported to supporters in the riding, along with research and background on the candidates running in their areas so people can vote with the best information available.

If thousands more sign the pledge, Leadnow will ask voters in the riding if they want to formally endorse a candidate.

In order to win the endorsement of the Leadnow community, candidates would need to be electable – meaning they have enough support in the riding that they have a legitimate shot at defeating their Conservative opponent – and acceptable – meaning that Leadnow supporters accept their positions on the issues.

If an endorsement is made, Leadnow will work to unite supporters behind the endorsed candidate.

Step three: Get out the vote

Whether or not a candidate is formally endorsed, Leadnow will work to get out the vote to make sure hundreds of thousands of progressive voters show up and vote on election day.

It's bigger than the election

Leadnow has heard loud and clear from our supporters that while defeating the Conservatives is an important priority, our campaign has to be about more than ousting Harper.

Leadnow formed to work for an open democracy, climate justice and a fair economy in Canada and while Harper is standing in the way of progress on these issues, we know our goals can't be accomplished just by changing the government.

To make long-term progress, we need power and we need politicians to take us seriously. Having a visible impact on the 2015 election helps build the power we need – if politicians know that our community has the power to make a real difference at the ballot box, they will do better at truly reflecting our interests.

Call to action

You can get involved by going to votetogether.ca to sign the pledge to Vote Together or by calling toll-free 1-855-LEADN0W (1-855-532-3609).

Leadnow Spark event: www.flickr.com/photos/leadnow/sets/72157649172573132/

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Science Matters David Suzuki

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental rights

Recognition for environmental rights the next big change.

The idea of a right to a healthy environment is getting traction at Canada's highest political levels. Federal Opposition MP Linda Duncan recently introduced "An Act to Establish a Canadian Environmental Bill of Rights" in Parliament. If it's passed, our federal government will have a legal duty to protect Canadians' right to live in a healthy environment.

[I travelled] across Canada with the David Suzuki Foundation's Blue Dot Tour to encourage people to work for recognition of such a right – locally, regionally and nationally. At the local level, the idea of recognizing citizens' right to live in a healthy environment is already taking hold. Richmond, Vancouver, The Pas, Manitoba, and the Montreal borough of Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie all recently passed municipal declarations recognizing this basic right.

Our ultimate goal is to have the right to a healthy environment recognized in the Constitution's Charter of Rights and Freedoms and a federal environmental bill of rights is a logical precursor. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms itself was preceded by a federal statute, the Bill of Rights, enacted under Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative government in 1960… An earlier attempt to pass a Canadian environmental bill of rights (also led by Linda Duncan) gained the support of MPs from various parties before its passage through Parliament was interrupted by the 2011 federal election…

I've seen so many positive changes in our legal systems and social safety net in my 78 years – including adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982. My family was incarcerated in the BC Interior during the Second World War just for being of Japanese descent, even though we were born and raised in Canada. Like other people of colour, my parents didn't have the right to vote until 1948. First Nations people on reserves couldn't vote until 1960. And women weren't even considered "persons" under Canadian law until 1918 when they were given voting rights. Homosexuality was a crime punishable by prison until 1969! I'm convinced that legal recognition for environmental rights will be the next big change…

We can't live and be well without clean air and water, nutritious food and the numerous services that diverse and vibrant natural environments provide. Even in Canada where our spectacular nature and abundant water are sources of pride, we can no longer take these necessities for granted. More than 1,000 drinking-water advisories are in effect in Canada at any time, many of them in First Nations communities. More than half of us live in areas where air quality reaches dangerous levels of toxicity. And from Grassy Narrows and Sarnia's Chemical Valley in Ontario to Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, people are being poisoned because industrial interests and profits are prioritized over their right to live healthy lives… More than half the world's nations already recognize environmental rights. It's time for Canada to live up to its values and join this growing global movement.

There's no date yet for a vote on Bill C-634, but its introduction has started a conversation among politicians in Ottawa. Let's hope people from across the political spectrum will recognize the importance of ensuring that all Canadians have the right to a healthy environment.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor Ian Hanington. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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Big Data's dark history

by Geoff Olson

Big data is a buzzterm that has softened into a tabloid cliché in a remarkably short time. It refers to the massive quantities of publicly and privately archived information that can be digitally analyzed to identify subtle patterns and trends. Interested parties range from marketers to policy makers to students to hackers.

"Big data is at the foundation of all the megatrends that are happening today, from social to mobile to cloud to gaming," says Chris Lynch of Vertica Systems. All thanks to faster computer processing, sophisticated software, cheap mobility and vast, billowy clouds of personal information. No aspect of our lives in the 21st century will remain untouched or unseen by big data, experts insist.

In a recent issue of Wired, the magazine's founding executive director, Kevin Kelly, reminisced about a question he put to Google cofounder Larry Page in 2000. Why, with so many web search companies out there, were he and colleague Sergey Brin getting into the game by offering search for free?

"Oh, we're really making an AI," Page responded. Artificial intelligence, that is.

IBM subsidiary poster from 1934:
"See everything with Hollerith punchcards."

"Rather than use AI to make its search better, Google is using search to make its AI better," Kelly would later realize. In other words, each query instructs the company's networked machine intelligence to sharpen its inventory of concepts. For example, image searches for "dog" teaches the AI to refine its recognition of the word, independent of the breed, angle of view or lighting.

Bear in mind this is happening now, even without the much-ballyhooed prediction of machine consciousness. Kelly predicts cloud computing will have a network effect, feeding on itself as more people train the AIs of Google and other companies.

"Our AI future is likely to be ruled by an oligarchy of two or three large, general-purpose cloud-based commercial intelligences," he concludes. Brands with brains, in effect. But don't worry, autonomous machine intelligence only makes a huge swath of Earth's population redundant in sci-fi dystopias, not in Kelly's sunny speculations – even though current digital technology has already made hundreds of thousands of North American jobs redundant, affecting photographers, journalists, legal secretaries, copywriters, factory workers, clerical workers and cashiers.

If we look into the unsettling early history of computation and big data, we have plenty of reasons to doubt Kelly's uncritical, bring-it-on optimism.

"Mankind barely noticed when the concept of massively organized information quietly emerged to become a means of social control, a weapon of war and a roadmap for group destruction," writes investigative author Edwin Black in his landmark 2008 study, *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation*.

Reichsführer Adolf Hitler was determined to eliminate a large ethnic fraction of Germans, but intermarriage and secularization made it difficult to track racial bloodlines. "This was the Nazi data lust. Not just to count the Jews, but to identify them," notes the author. IBM Germany, known in 1930s Europe as *Deutsche Hollerith Maschinen-Gesellschaft*, or *Dehomag*, had just the thing necessary for the job: index cards with punched holes.

Dehomag leased and maintained the machines that profiled all German Jews through punchcard processing. The machines were the analogue precursors to today's digital computers and the punchcards were both proto-programs and tickets to the death camps.

The company was founded in 1898 by German inventor Herman Hollerith as a census tabulating company, but by the time of Hitler's rise, *Dehomag* was a subsidiary of International Business Machines, which had its head office in New York. "IBM NY always understood – from the outset in 1933 – that it was courting and doing business with the upper echelon of the Nazi Party," writes Black. The personal representatives of IBM chairman Thomas J. Watson – whose last name now adorns the company's *Jeopardy*-playing supercomputer – kept their boss appraised of the German subsidiary's work, the author claims.

The Holocaust would have proceeded without big data, but the company's manpower and machines greatly expedited the process.

"Solipsistic and dazzled by its own swirling universe of technical possibilities, IBM was self-gripped by a special amoral corporate mantra: 'If it can be done, it should be done.' To the blind technocrat, the means were more important than the ends.. The destruction of the Jewish people became even less important because the invigorating nature of IBM's technical achievement was only heightened by the fantastical profits to be made at a time when bread lines stretched across the world," Black writes.

The phrase, "turning people into numbers," traces back to the identification tattooed onto Jewish flesh as part of the automated machinery of mass death. The Holocaust was, in effect, the premiere of big data in the 20th century.

In 1945, the year of World War II's end, big data reached a second benchmark with the first problem assigned to the first working electronic digital computer. Hungarian mathematician John von Neumann used ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator And Comput-

The Holocaust would have proceeded without big data, but the company's manpower and machines greatly expedited the process.

er) to perform millions of calculations required for making the hydrogen bomb. The input/output involved one million punchcards and the calculations took six weeks on a footprint of 1,800 square feet. Today, the processing would take minutes or less on a notepad computer.

In other words, big data, surveillance and militarism have been intertwined since the first *continued p.27...*

GMO Bites

Panama fines GM fish company

The Government of Panama has fined the company AquaBounty for breaching numerous national environmental laws during its ongoing research and development of a genetically modified (GM) Atlantic salmon. The GM fish eggs were shipped from Canada, provoking fears of environmental contamination in both countries.

"This is an incredibly risky technology that threatens the future of wild Atlantic salmon," said Lucy Sharratt of the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN). "These corporate violations expose how easy it would be for containment of this GM fish to fail."

The small US company, AquaBounty, operates a facility in Prince Edward Island where it produces GM salmon eggs that are shipped to Panama for further research and development. At the end of last year, the Minister of the Environment approved the production of the GM fish and fish eggs in Canada, but the company also hopes to get approval soon to produce the GM fish in Panama and to sell the fish on the market in Canada and the US. If approved for human consumption in Canada or the US, the salmon would be the first GM animal in the world to be produced for food.

The company also hopes to get approval soon to produce the GM fish in Panama and to sell the fish on the market in Canada and the US. If approved for human consumption…the salmon would be the first GM animal in the world to be produced for food.

"GM salmon eggs from PEI could've already caused environmental damage in Panama," said Sharon Labchuk of the PEI group called Islanders Say No to Frankenfish. "Our worst fear is this GM fish escapes and PEI becomes the source of harmful living pollution around the world."

The fines, totalling $9,500 USD (close to the maximum allowable of $10,000), are the conclusion of a government investigation triggered by a detailed complaint sent by the Environmental Advocacy Center of Panama (*Centro de Incidencia Ambiental de Panama* or CIAM) to the National Environmental Authority in Panama.

"Canada's Environment Minister approved production of this GM salmon in Canada while the investigation in Panama was still underway. We just don't share her confidence that the fish won't escape. If an escape does happen, it could have irreversible impacts on our wild Atlantic salmon," said Mark Butler of the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) in Nova Scotia. EAC, with Living Oceans Society (BC), is currently engaged in a court challenge of the Minister's decision to approve GM fish production in Canada.

In November 2013, CBAN sent a letter to the Minister of the Environment, Leona Aglukkaq, outlining the complaint in Panama and asking her to halt the environmental risk assessment of the GM fish until the investigation was concluded. The Minister announced her approval just two days later.

Panama's National Environmental Authority found that AquaBounty "repeatedly violated… environmental regulations." The Authority found the company did not maintain up-to-date permits for the "introduction of the subject species" (i.e. the GM salmon) or evidence of a biosecurity strategy. The Authority also confirmed that the company failed to secure legally required permits related to water use and water discharge before they began operating.

This is the second time the Panamanian Authority has investigated AquaBounty and ruled on missing permits.

From Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN).
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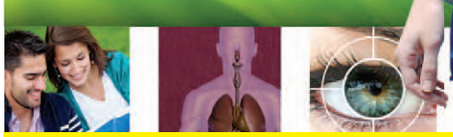

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Rescuing democracy from politics

by Elizabeth May

Since 2006, we have had a prime minister who has shut down Parliament to avoid political embarrassment (something virtually unheard of throughout the Commonwealth nations) and twice done so illegitimately; a prime minister who has placed his executive powers above the law by refusing to accept the supremacy of Parliament. He has ignored inconvenient court rulings and even impugned the reputation of the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. He has also gagged researchers and scientists and suppressed scientific information, and he has forced through massive omnibus laws without adequate care or review, in the process making drastic transformational changes to laws and policies – from taxing income trusts to changing the retirement age for Canadians, to overhauling our criminal justice system and to cancelling decades' worth of environmental laws.

None of these actions were proclaimed in campaign platforms. In fact, on income trusts and retirement age, the opposite was pledged. Had Harper promised to cut scientific research and shut down libraries and repeal environmental laws to grease the gears for pipelines and tankers, he could never have formed government at all.

The same prime minister, for the first time in Canadian history, has treated our international treaty obligations like old leaves to be burned in fall bonfires.

The Harper administration has been disrespectful to the UN and in the process has alienated many of our traditional admirers and supporters. One incident that is burned into my memory was Stephen Harper's reaction to the killing of a Canadian peacekeeper at a UN observer post in southern Lebanon. It was August 2006 and the Israeli assault of Lebanon followed the Hezbollah shelling of Israel from locations within Lebanon. An Israeli bomb hit the UN observer station, killing a member of Princess Patricia's Light Infantry, Major Paeta Hess-von Kruedener. Right up to the moment their station was hit, the UN peacekeepers had been in radio contact with the Israeli army, confirming their location and asking for the shelling to stop. Nationals from Finland, China and Austria were also killed. Their governments condemned the shelling, calling Israel's actions unacceptable, but our prime minister attacked the United Nations. "We want to find out why this United Nations post was attacked and also why it remained manned during what is now, more or less, a war, during obvious danger to these individuals," said Stephen Harper.

Canada was the only nation to drop out of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In defending this move, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird criticized the UNCCD as a "talk fest." Prime Minister Harper dismissed the convention as a bureaucratic waste, suggesting that the $350,000 that Canada contributes was "not an effective way to spend taxpayers' money."

This is ironic given that this amount is a fraction of the sums the Conservative government routinely spends on ads supporting its own economic platforms, largely for programs that are being reannounced, not yet or never funded. One single government ad for the Keystone pipeline in the *New Yorker* cost over

$200,000. Forgetting for the moment that the UNCCD represents a significant scientific initiative aimed at the causes of one of Africa's (and increasingly the rest of the world's, including Canada's) leading agricultural problems, clearly Stephen Harper does not understand the principles of compromise and leverage in international affairs. These were principles applied in Canada diplomacy, and as a result, Canada has been looked to for leadership internationally. International leadership came at a low cost to the taxpayer, such as the small cost of staying in the UNCDD. Such multilateral efforts have paid enormous dividends to Canadian business and Canadian tourists abroad.

Canadian diplomats always had a reputation for being among the best and brightest of international negotiators – until now, when, muzzled by a PMO anxious that all keep on message, and directed by a prime minister who seems to think he can do it alone, we are losing both our international reputation and our effectiveness in our international dealings.

Somehow, Canadians have allowed what is essentially an elected dictatorship to reverse decades of policies that were drawn from the well of political consensus. As Joe Clark recounted in *How We Lead*, Russian leaders were surprised that his policies were so close to Trudeau's. He explained that the policies were not Liberal or Progressive Conservative; they were Canadian. Left, right, or centre, previous governments cared about environmental protection. Left, right, or centre, previous governments cared about our international reputation. Left, right, or centre, previous governments respected parliamentary traditions, civil liberties, trade union rights. And left, right, or centre, previous governments formed policy based on at least some degree of collective approval.

How is it that with the benefits of democracy, the right to speak freely and gather in the town square to protest governmental actions, and the ability to organize, lobby and press for policies that will achieve the highest values for the common good, we privileged Canadians are so disengaged?

We need to be deeply concerned about why Canadians, among the most freedom loving of people, are turning off politics and losing our rights, privileges and patrimony to special interests.

Engagement requires a degree of trust and respect in political institutions. But being cynical about government is now firmly entrenched in our political culture. The behaviour of our politicians is fodder for satire, in many cases deservedly so. Sadly, polls show that politicians are less respected or admired than those in most other professions.

Parliament is not a bad place because of the members of parliament. It is a bad place because the large political parties have executed a complete takeover of MPs' freedom of action and freedom of speech.

Part of the blame surely also rests on the current practice of politics: the culture of attack ads as substitute for fair-minded debate; smear campaigns as substitute for reasoned assessment of experience, character, and ability; voter suppression through robo-calls, as in the 2011 election where thousands of voters received calls intended to misdirect them from the correct polling place; a government in constant election mode, with an imperious disregard for Parliament, and a rigidly partisan and uncompromising party discipline that stifles MPs' consciences and very often the interests and desires of their own constituents.

To watch Question Period on television is enough to make most people change the channel. I see school groups come into the House only to have teachers shepherd their young charges out of the chamber as MPs descend into behaviour no teacher would allow in a classroom. We rail against bullying, only to see the swagger of bullies, the taunts of classroom bad boys, in the House of Commons.

We have a prime minister who has introduced the most vicious use of attack ads, aimed at destroying the public perceptions of the personalities of his opponents. For the first time in our history, the airwaves are polluted with hyper-partisan attack ads months – and even years – before an election.

This climate has clearly alienated many voters.

You would think that public disengagement from democracy would be alarming to any politician or political party, but at least some political parties seem to want Canadians to opt out. Why? Because, perverse as it may seem in a democracy, it can bring the offending party an advantage. If a large segment of the population fails to vote, and many people in this segment support that party's opponents, it is to that party's advantage for them not to vote. Recent attempts by US Republican Parties to restrict voter registration are a case in point.

And the longer I am involved in the political process, the more I believe the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper has been using similar tactics to deliberately reduce voter turnout.

Is this really what we as Canadians want for ourselves?

Whether by Machiavellian design or from voter cynicism, in the last federal election fewer than 60 per cent of those citizens entitled to vote actually did so.

But whatever we feel about politicians, we need good government.

The Constitution does not mention the prime minister as part of government. It makes no reference to a PMO, the prime minister's office. The original BNA Act was premised on "peace, order and good government."

As humourist Arthur Black observes, "Two out of three ain't bad."

We have something of a chicken and egg problem. We are experiencing a serious, pervasive assault on democracy, but only democracy can save us.

It is not too late to rescue democracy from politics. The way we talk about democracy conflates the idea of politics with democracy. But they are not the same thing. Politics and democracy are, while related, very different. Partisan politics, operating at the level of blood sport, is the sworn enemy of democracy, even as it parades in democracy's clothing. True, the word "politics" comes from the Greek word polis, meaning a city-state. From the early Athenian philosophers – Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle – came the first concepts of democracy.

For an Athenian, there was no way to separate democracy and the polis. As Alan Ryan observes in his brilliant and sweeping review of political thought, On Politics, an ancient Greek might not recognize the United States as a democracy – an observation that I am sure he would apply to Canada as well. According to Ryan:

"No Athenian believed that a Greek could be uninterested in politics. At the very least, self-defense demanded that a man keep a close eye on the holders of power; they understood what Trotsky observed twenty-five hundred years later. 'You say you are not interested in politics; but politics is interested in you.' The uninterest in politics and the ignorance about both politicians and political institutions displayed by British or American *citizens* of the present day would have been incomprehensible.'"

Excerpted from **Who We Are: Reflections on My Life and Canada** by **Elizabeth May**, the leader of the Green Party of Canada and Canada's first elected Green MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands. She is the author of eight books on environmental and political topics, including her latest work Who We Are: Reflections on My Life and Canada.

A seasonal sampler

Vancouver Cantata Singers: A Christmas Reprise

Shakespeare advised, "If music be the food of love, play on" and you're in the right place and time to feast on local, seasonal sonic celebrations and larger concerts at community venues – featuring trad faves and new variations for fans of all ages. Listing all the options would fill this issue of *Common Ground*, but let's get inspired and start with a glance at the menu.

Shop craft fairs and Christmas markets, but also plan and Google events and attractions. There's lots to choose from, including live theatre, special performances by orchestras and choirs and choruses, including the Bach Choir (VancovuerBachChior.com), Vancouver Men's Chorus, Chamber Choir and Symphony (Vancouver-Symphony.ca).

There are also activities galore and lights for cameras. Choirs, floats and 65 marching bands gather for the 2015 Santa Claus Parade, Sunday December 7, in front of the Art Gallery, 10:30AM. The parade takes off from Georgia and Brougham at 1PM, travelling east to Howe and Davie before sending Santa off for some free skating at the Robson Square Ice Rink where 12 Days of Christmas features music of all sorts (see RobsonSquare.com/events) from December 13 to 24; skate rentals are $4. Ride the Stanley Park Train (TicketLeader.ca) and take your skates and camera up the lift to the North Pole on Grouse Mountain (604-980-9311) – also on until Christmas Eve.

Stroll East Vancouver's Trinity Street between the 2400 and 2900 blocks and other highly charged neighbourhoods. And don't miss VanDusen Botanical Garden's Festival of Lights, December 10 to 18, 4:30-9PM, and from December 26 to January 4 (TicketForce.com).

Some examples of Christmas events:

- **Dec. 13**: The 5K Ugly Christmas Sweater Dash starts 11AM at Olympic Village. Proceeds to the Children's Wish Foundation (nowthatsugly.com/vancouver-dash/).
- **Dec. 16**: Chanukah Celebrations include Light up the Night at Canada's tallest menorah in front of the Art Gallery, 6PM.
- **Dec. 21**: The festival at Mount Pleasant Community Centre.
- **The Singing Christmas Tree** (VancouverSingingChristmasTree.com/) celebrations (see TicketsTonight.ca) of the 100th anniversary of the Truce of 1914 when German and allied soldiers sang in No Man's Land.
- **Dec. 20-21**: A Women's Winter Faire, Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street, 11-5PM (www.soundsandfuries.com/faire.html).

Finally, three different musical events, guaranteed to please everyone: Vancouver Cantata Singers: A Christmas Reprise X11, Winter Harp and Van Django Bells. The VCS annual Christmas concert is Saturday, December 20 in Holy Rosary Cathedral, 646 Richards Street, 2PM. Tickets $20 at www.vancouvercantatasingers.com or 604-730-8856. This treasured yuletide tradition is a matinee performance – for a break in shopping – of the pure and simple joys of an unaccompanied choir in glorious acoustics. Very accessible, affordable and certain to sell out.

One of the country's most joyous and magical annual traditions, Winter Harp, is back for a 21st season, returning to the coast to close out its 11-city Western Canada Christmas concert. See www.winterharp.com for more information.

A must-see on the holiday calendar for more than two decades, Winter Harp is a gloriously evocative concert experience garnering sold-out houses and standing ovations. Clad in medieval attire, the ensemble performs carols, Celtic, medieval, world and Spanish tunes on harps, drums, tambourines, temple bells, flutes, the ethereal-sounding *bass psaltery* – the only one like it in the world – the *organistrum* (an early form of the hurdy-gurdy) and the Swedish *nyckelharpa*.

Vancouver's hottest swing string quartet, Van Django Bells, is touring a Christmas Variety Show:

- **Dec. 14**: Charlie White Theatre, Sidney.
- **Dec. 16**: Presentation House, North Vancouver.
- **Dec. 18**: Michael J. Fox Theatre, Burnaby.
- **Dec. 19**: St. James Hall, 3214 W. 10th Ave.
- **Dec. 20**: Mount Seymour United Church, North Vancouver.

For more information, see www.vandjango.com

Winter Harp

Van Django's music is punchy, driving and rhythmically inventive, combining a wealth of musical influences in the gypsy jazz style of Django Reinhardt and the 1930s Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Joining violinist Cameron Wilson, guitarist Budge Schachte, guitarist/cellist Finn Manniche and bassist Brent Gubbels are harmonica virtuoso Keith Bennett, and vocalist Leslie Monteney.

Wilson says, "Everyone had a great time at last year's premiere concert. Folks loved the mix of music and the feel-good vibes so we expanded it to include everything from the evocative *I'll Be Home for Christmas* to *Let It Snow, Santa Baby* and *Silver Bells* to *Ave Maria*, a bit of Beethoven, and much more, something every ear, heart, and tapping foot will enjoy."

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic**. brucemason@shaw.ca

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– Marshall McLuhan

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– Robert M. Lilienfeld, and William L. Rathje

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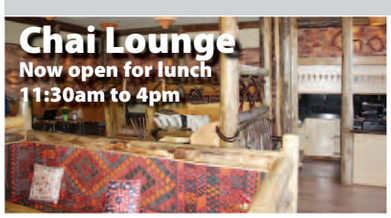

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Citizens demand own independent pipeline review

photo by Zack Embree www.zackembree.com

The government of Quebec announced it will do its own provincial review of the Energy East pipeline. British Columbia can do it too.

Consider this question: why did citizens hike up Burnaby Mountain each day to be arrested if Kinder Morgan is simply conducting technical feasibility studies for a pipeline?

Why are First Nations and municipalities spending precious resources fighting the National Energy Board in the courts?

Why did former BC Hydro CEO Marc Eliesen quit the federal National Energy Board pipeline review, calling it a "farce"?

This is the growing crisis of public confidence. Polling shows 7 in 10 British Columbians no longer trust Ottawa to deliver a fair decision in the public interest. Simply put, we know the answer from the federal cabinet is already a "yes".

The government of Quebec announced it will do its own provincial review of the Energy East pipeline. British Columbia can do it too.

Fortunately British Columbia has jurisdiction over this pipeline. Like every province, we have the power to hold an independent review.

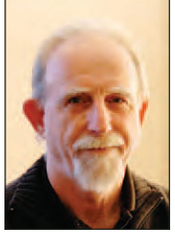
The Union of BC Municipalities supports withdrawing BC from the equivalency agreement. So do both provincial opposition parties and respected industry experts like Marc Eliesen. This was an agreement signed by the BC Liberals that opted the province out of our own review process in favor of relying only on a federal government review. All we have to do is give Ottawa 30 days notice and we could be free to chart our own course.

What we need is the political will. We've created a simple petition at BCReview.ca calling on Premier Clark to set up a pipeline review that the public can trust. A review that has the option of delivering a "no".

Please sign our new petition to Premier Christy Clark today and share it with as many people as you can. Thank you!

This is the growing crisis of public confidence. Polling shows 7 in 10 British Columbians no longer trust Ottawa to deliver a fair decision in the public interest.

Taken from a letter from Kai Nagata, Energy and Democracy Director at Dogwood Initiative in Victoria. Tel. 250-370-9930 www.dogwoodinitiative.org



Mac McLaughlin

StarWise

December 2014

ASTROLOGY IS A SYMBOLIC language in which the symbols for the planets and signs, and the aspects that the planets form, relate reams of information. The greatest stories ever told lie within the pages of the ephemeris. The ephemeris is a book of numbers and symbols that informs us of the planetary positions throughout any given year. The stories are limited by our intuition, imagination and background experience regarding the potential power of the planets. Just as an example, written in the shorthand of the starry language, Uranus is in square with Pluto. The stargazers stroke their beards in recognition of the implications that this very dynamic planetary aspect signifies. "Say what?" you say! "What the hay are they talking about anyway?"

Let's break it down. Uranus formed a square with Pluto in the spring of 2010 continuing to the spring of 2019. The majority of this square aspect takes place while Uranus moves through Aries and Pluto journeys through Capricorn. A square aspect is formed when the planets come within 90 degrees of each other. I give an approximate eight-degree orb of influence. In the old astrological textbooks, the square aspect is noted as evil and when the planets are in square, they create all kinds of havoc, unrest and discord. In my own take on the subject, a square is about as evil as an intersection. If you approach the intersection and use caution and care, you get through safely; if you insist on blasting through, we know it's just a matter of time before you meet tragedy, injury or death. Is the intersection evil? I think not, but how we handle it makes all the difference in the world.

You can use this Uranus square Pluto as an overlay and pin it on the tensions in Ukraine, Africa, the Middle East and everywhere else where huge problems exist and where the cost of human life is very high and counting. Uranus in Aries spells out revolution and rebellion in which people strive to overcome repression with aggression and violence. Pluto in Capricorn symbolizes the birth and death of nations and all forms of power, be it street gangs, religious fanaticism or political power plays within all governments.

It all adds up to the same thing in which great turmoil and upheaval takes place. The forces of darkness and light clash and man continues to add more karmic indebtedness to the cosmic pile. Certainly, we need more love, more peace, more prayer and more help in solving the issues that have plagued humankind throughout the Iron Age.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.

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ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Read the introduction regarding Uranus in Aries. You're not done; you've only just begun and you must learn to lay down your gun. You're the first-born and must lead the way into the future. Commence your ascent of the internal mountain of peace, light and love. Lead with the torch of surrender, compassion and truth.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
If Taurus had its way, everything would remain the same, just the way Taureans like it. Like it or not, the only constant is change within itself. In the big picture, you have about five years to truly weigh up the pros and cons of all things. After that, changes come with or without your consent.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
You're the word merchant par excellence and teacher and storyteller. Now's the time to inspire the young minds and teach them the ways in which we can heal our planet and make the world a better place to live in. You've got the gift and certainly the spirit to inspire and ignite that fire.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
Rest a while and take some time to delve deeply into what it is you must do in order to nurture and protect our planet, youth and all living creatures. We are your family and we need your help and protection. No sense waiting too long, as time and tide waits for no man.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
Yes, you are the king or queen – of what, though? A pile of money, some big mansion, somewhere south? You can sit there and gloat about your empty attainments or you can use that kingly power you have been given and spread your light, warmth and love to all who are hungry, needy and suffering.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Virgo needs to be needed, useful and a significant part of what is going on. Well, we need you now, more than ever. You are capable, competent and none can work harder, longer and more devotedly than you. Plus, you care on a deep level and have great gifts of discernment, modesty and honesty.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Rahu, the north node of the Moon, is travelling in the middle of Libra. The lunar nodes have much to do with our personal karma. Rahu seeks to acquire anything and everything, but he can never be satisfied nor satiated. Use this energy to attain higher knowledge and spiritual wisdom. Seek and you shall find.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
It's karmic payoff time, big-time. Now is the best time to settle all accounts to the best of your ability. Truly, there is nothing else to do anyway. Once the burden falls from your shoulders, you will feel a great sense of relief. It is also a time to start anew, to start fresh.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
Read Scorpio for soon it will be your time to set things right and get yourself on the right track or pay off some type of karmic burden from the past. If it sounds a tad ominous, it is not that way. It's exactly the other way, meaning freedom, happiness and harmony. 2015 tells the tale.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
The winter solstice and the Capricorn new Moon take place on December 21. It indicates a time in which you can make a new start and truly reinvent yourself. Venus and Pluto conjunct close to the solstice giving you the opportunity to reassess matters of the heart. A powerful dying and birthing process takes hold.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
It's time for some behind the scenes work to take place as you make preparations for some type of dynamic action as the New Year begins. You may feel emboldened and alive; the old spark is rekindled. It's time to clear out the old and bring in the new – body, mind and soul-wise.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
The Moon transits through Pisces December 26 and 27 creating a series of good planetary aspects that bring joy, peace and happiness your way. Keep in mind that Neptune, co-ruler of Pisces, will visit your sign for 10 more years. Within that time, your spirituality will develop in a most dynamic way.

... **Olson** *from p.16*

half of the 20th century. It's no accident that data-driven wars of aggression abroad come bundled with data-driven domestic surveillance at home. From drone strikes to wireless wiretapping, we still live under Edwin Black's dictum of the technocrats: "If it can be done, it should be done."

"As we invent more species of AI, we will be forced to surrender more of what is supposedly unique about humans," Kevin Kelly brightly insists. "The greatest benefit of the arrival of artificial intelligence is that AIs will help define humanity. We need AIs to tell us who we are."

That is tragically wrong. We don't need the entire contents of Wikipedia on an implant, a fully sentient Siri or AIs with corporate selfhood to tell us who we are. What we need is untrammelled wilderness and the companionship of other human beings, despite their funky smells, weird ideas and boundless capacity to disappoint.

Big data and AI can be used to either distort or cultivate our humanity. I suspect we will continue to use them to do both. The future is unwritten and we cannot presume that networked machine intelligence offers us a binary option as humanity's saviour or destroyer. But we have every reason to be cautious.

I have a coffee table book called *The Human Face of Big Data* filled with nifty charts, up-tempo quotes and smiling faces. The caption on the back cover reads, "Every animate and inanimate object on Earth will soon be generating data, including our homes, our cars, and yes, even our bodies." It is accompanied by a photograph of a baby surrounded by a clutch of gadget-clutching visitors, all half-shrouded in darkness. She lies on her back in a brightly lit crib, seen and scanned, but untouched by human hands.

It's an image unintentionally Faustian in character, of a child isolated by the very tools intended to liberate her, through lifelong quantification. But as sociologist William Bruce Cameron once observed, "Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted." ◀

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The CRTC and the internet's future

Last December, telecom policy-makers at the CRTC began a year-long consultation on the future of Canada's Internet services. The Review of Wholesale Services consultation is examining how Canadians are served by the current structure of our telecommunications system and the policies that govern it.

What's at stake is whether Canadians will be able to access affordable, independent and reliable Internet services that support their everyday well-being.

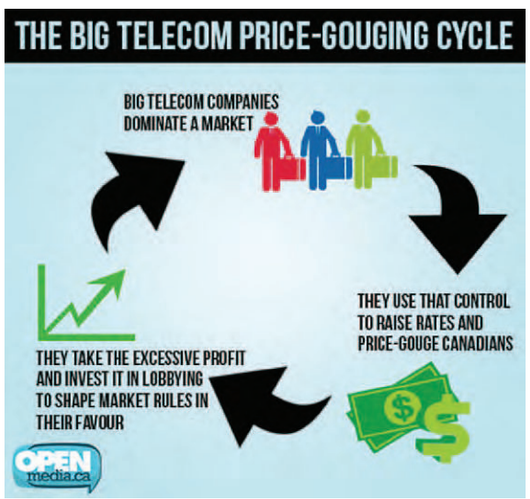
Despite gains on several fronts, crucial steps remain in reforming our telecommunications sector to ensure it provides a wide range of cost-effective services. Sadly, Canada's telecom market is currently broken and driven by oligopolistic forces that prevent Canadians from being able to fully benefit from the possibilities of broadband Internet.

For example, in 2013, large incumbent carriers – such as Bell, Rogers, Telus and Shaw – controlled 92% of the Canadian residential market. The result of this lack of choice is that Canadians pay some of the highest prices in the industrialized world for Internet services, a finding confirmed by several independent reports, including the CRTC-commissioned Wall Report (http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/publications/reports/rp140714.htm)

And the Organization for Economic Development (OECD)'s Communications Outlook. (https://openmedia.ca/blog/confirmed-canadians-pay-some-highest-prices-some-worst-telecom-service-industrialized-world)

Despite this challenging legacy, the CRTC's consultation could potentially improve our telecom system in two critical ways: First, the CRTC could overhaul open access rules to make sure all providers, large and small, can operate on a level playing field, by ensuring that smaller providers have cost-based access to the networks. Second, the CRTC could extend this cost-based regime to next generation, ultra-fast, fibre Internet networks, to ensure that independent providers can keep up with growing bandwidth demands.

Given what's at stake, our organization has been an intervener in this CRTC process since the beginning. We amplified the voices of everyday Canadians by facilitating nearly 25,000 independently written submissions to the regulator.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OPEN media.ca

Interestingly, CRTC Chair Jean-Pierre Blais acknowledged the impact of everyday Canadians in his recent speech to the Vancouver Board of Trade: "The very small lanterns of thousands of individual Canadians often create a powerful beam of light. It's only when the stage is fully illuminated, by all those lanterns, that the full story becomes clear. It is only then that the full public interest comes to light." (http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=900869)

While Big Telecom providers want Canadians to believe that fair open access policies will hurt investment in our telecommunication infrastructure, this claim simply doesn't bear scrutiny. Interveners such as the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and Primus have thoroughly dismantled such claims by using the incumbents' own executive statements, annual reports, shareholder messaging and financial data.

Where open access rules presently exist – albeit as a "cost plus" instead of "cost based" regime – incumbents have continued to invest in our networks and new offerings have sprung forth. The evidence is clear that open access rules for independent ISPs would not only lower prices and improve choice, but they are also critical to enabling innovation that would not otherwise be able to occur.

While cost-based access is an important solution in the near term, it is also important that the CRTC consider a more effective long-term solution by moving toward opening the networks through structural separation – that is, putting an end to telecom companies controlling both their service delivery and also the infrastructure.

This is the most effective long-term fix for our broken telecom market. Doing so would put us in good international company as this longer-term strategy already enjoys support from the OECD. (http://www.oecd.org/daf/competition/recommendationconcerning-structur alseparationinregulatedindustries.htm)

Canadians have been stuck with high prices and lack of choice for far too long and our digital economy is suffering. It is time for the CRTC to mandate open access rules that work towards lowering prices, improving choice and decentralizing control of our telecom market. It's just common sense.

You can learn more by reading OpenMedia's submission to the CRTC at https://openmedia.ca/CRTCsubmission

Steve Anderson is the executive director of OpenMedia.ca, a community-based organization that safeguards the possibilities of the open Internet. **Josh Tabish** is OpenMedia.ca's campaigns manager. A version of this piece originally appeared in the CCPA's **The Monitor**.

... *Avaaz from p.3*

Here's some progress updates

Ebola Volunteers: Over 2,500 skilled Avaazers have applied to volunteer to risk their lives to go to West Africa to help stop this deadly disease in its tracks. A stunning example of courage and humanity. Many have been processed by our partner organizations and are beginning to travel to the front lines of the crisis.

Ebola fundraiser: Our community has raised over $2.2 million for relief organizations at the front lines.

Save the bees: We delivered our 3.4 million-strong petition to a US government commission studying whether to ban the pesticides that are killing the bees.

Palestine: After the horror in Gaza earlier this year, we're pulling out all the stops to get some of the world's largest pension funds and corporations to divest from businesses that support the Israeli military occupation and illegal colonization of Palestine. We're getting close to winning, which could be a game changer for the conflict, and hopes for peace... and much, much more.

I just came from a meeting of the Avaaz team and some of us cried – ahem, maybe including me – at what a pure joy it is to serve our mission and this community and just how much potential, together, we have to make a difference in the world.

The climate march and the Ebola volunteers campaign, as well as everyone donating, are examples of how Avaazers are stepping up to an even greater level of commitment to this vessel we share. And with each step we take, our power grows.

There's a lot of fear and greed and ignorance in our world, but we are steadily bringing love and hope and smart, effective strategies to make a difference. And in every way, we're just at the tip of the iceberg of what's possible. Let's keep building this vessel and investing our time and hope more deeply into it because something like this is precious and the world needs us more than ever.

With love and huge appreciation for this movement, Ricken, with Nell, Pascal, Marie, Laila, Andrea and the whole Avaaz team.

Avaaz.org is a 40-million-person global campaign network that works to ensure that the views and values of the world's people shape global decision making. ("Avaaz" means "voice" or "song" in many languages.) Avaaz members live in every nation of the world; our team is spread across 18 countries on six continents and operates in 17 languages.

Learn about some of Avaaz's biggest campaigns here: http://www.avaaz.org/en/highlights.php/?footer or follow us on Facebook http://www.facebook.com/Avaaz> or Twitter <http://twitter.com/Avaaz

A photographer's love letter

Thanks mostly to its enviably spectacular, natural setting, Vancouver proudly and perennially tops myriad lists of the most beautiful, livable, expensive, under-and-over-rated – etc., etc. – cities.

A new book strives to capture it through a heartfelt collection of gallery quality panoramas, created with a veteran photographer's practised and patient jeweller's eye for light, colour and composition: David Nunuk's *Vancouver Light: Visions of a City* (Harbour Publishing).

"It's a love letter to my home," Nunuk says of the 18-month, 128-page celebratory labour and adventure. "Vancouver's gorgeous, obviously. I'm a fool for Stanley Park. But I've found hidden places and new perspectives, over many seasons and sessions," adds the former tree planter and prospector, whose work has appeared in *Time*, *Reader's Digest*, geography publications, stock photos, US and Canadian postage stamps and his 2003 best-seller, *Natural Light: Visions of British Columbia,* also published by Harbour.

Nunuk finds the fleeting, fragile balance and juxtaposition of natural and man-made light. "I like having the city to myself. Setting up on Granville Street at 4 am as if in wilderness. Sometimes in the right place at the wrong time. I waded into place to catch the flame from the 9 o'clock gun in May, when climate, tide and light are just right. But for some reason it didn't fire that night. Was blessed by a warm pink blizzard of blossoms that thankfully lasted several days. Spent hours waiting for fish to jump and a month to capture couples walking in a fiery sunset along the Iona jetty in Richmond."

People – ubiquitous joggers, cyclists and tourists in the Lower Mainland landscape – are bit players, useful to establish scale, as the cityscape unfolds in page-turnin, two-page spreads, including the pencil skyline overwhelmed by storm clouds. Dozens of almost impossibly lit and detailed vistas – strolling Nitobe Garden, down the stretch at Hastings Park, tree-lined tunnels, and eerie urchin-like BC Place – are made possible by digital stitching and irresistible for repeat visits.

All the icons are here: Fred Herzog-like neighbourhoods, what's left of glorious neon, the bridges, beaches and buildings. But Nunuk also shares what he calls "sea-worm views" – under Dundarave Pier and the Cambie Bridge, West Van behind a foreground bed of sea lettuce or burst of star fish, the city framed in a storm pipe, a Badlands-like moonlit sulphur pile, train yards, container cranes, Fraser River log booms, Steveston's fishing dock, tugs, freighters, passenger ferries and pleasure boats. Reminders that a great, beautiful natural port first brought us here.

> Nunuk finds the fleeting, fragile balance and juxtaposition of natural and man-made light… Loving the planet starts with our own particular place.

Loving the planet starts with our own particular place. Long-time residents, newcomers, wannabees, visitors and folks who want to see what all the fuss – and expense – is about will adore David Nunuk's gift of *Vancouver Light.*

Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of **Our Clinic.** brucemason@shaw.ca

FILMS WORTH WATCHING Robert Alstead

Antarctica's golden years

Director Mike Leigh is a British institution, producing subtle, sensitive films that run deep, such as the 1996 *Palme d'Or* winner *Secrets & Lies* and his earlier *Life Is Sweet*. His latest work to hit these shores – opening on Christmas Day – is a biopic about the last 25 years of the great English impressionist J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851). Leigh is best known for films with well-rounded characters, but *Mr. Turner* has been earning praise as much for the visual strengths of his warts and all portrait of the brilliant, but flawed, artist. The ever-reliable Timothy Spall won Best Actor at Cannes 2014 for his performance as the titular character.

Antarctica has been in the news of late. A few months ago, two separate studies by NASA and University of Washington stated the Western Antarctic Ice Sheet was in "irreversible retreat... past the point of no return." We learned that coming generations could look forward to sea level rises of up to four metres around the world as the ice melted. So the release of the documentary, *Antarctica: A Year on Ice*, about the people who work on the frozen continent, is a timely one (Vancity, Dec. 5-11).

Director Anthony Powell, a satellite telecommunications engineer turned filmmaker, made the film with his wife over the course of 10 years and, as the title suggests, it charts 12 months on a US base in Antarctica through the white summer nights and the dark winter days. Often humorous, the film is an appreciation of the harsh environment, severe cold, pristine beauty of the natural icescape and the unique culture that has evolved there. Reviews suggest spectacular visuals combine well with an entertaining portrait of the temporary human population and a poignant reminder that, as one of the characters puts it, "These might be the golden years of Antarctica."

Snow is the backdrop for *Force Majeure,* a Swedish drama about a middle-aged family man whose world crumbles after a near-miss avalanche incident at a ski resort. When Tomas follows his instinctive urge to run for his life, abandoning his family, the skiing holiday descends into a living purgatory as he tries to come to terms with his action (at Vancity until Dec. 14).

Gemma Bovery is a sensuous, modern take on Gustave Flaubert's 1856 classic novel, based on Posy Simmonds' 1999 graphic novel. Gemma Arterton stars as a beautiful, bored and unfaithful wife whose neighbour Martin – also the film's narrator – wants to save from a very literary tragic ending when she moves next door in rural Normandy (opens Dec. 5).

I don't watch a lot of sports movies so I can safely say that *Next Goal Wins*, an underdog story about how the world's worst soccer team redeemed themselves, is one of the best I've seen. The documentary charts the comeback of a team of amateurs from American Samoa, from a devastating, historic 31-0 loss to Australia. The film gives sports clichés a new spin as the team draws on warrior spirit and the help of a fiery Dutch coach – who is carrying his own burden – to climb out of their hole. It is funny, uplifting and insightful. The one-off screening is hosted by DOXA on December 9 at Cinematheque (www.doxafestival.ca).

Robert Alstead is making a BC-set documentary Running on Climate. Support is welcome at www.fund.runningonclimate.com

Datebook Events

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DEC 5-7
Soul Light Meditation Workshop with Master Marilyn. Saturday-Sunday, 10AM-5PM, $55 each day at Master Sha's LPH Centre, 1280 Odlum Drive, Vancouver.

DEC 6-7
Become a Certified Life Coach or Executive Coach: This 2-day intensive will teach you everything you need to know to succeed. Only Certified Coaches Federation graduates earn the esteemed Certified Life Coach Practitioner designations. Sylvia Hotel, Vancouver. 866-455-2155 or 403-389-1190. www.certifiedcoachesfederation.com

DEC 12-14
'Exploring Self-Inquiry', a retreat with Mooji, on DVD, www.mooji.org At Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada. Beautiful ocean-front setting near Victoria. Register now at www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, programs@krishnamurti-canada.ca, 250-744-3354.

DEC 12-14
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Friday Introduction 7:30PM, $10; Course $395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

DEC 13
Learn to create a life of true freedom & power for yourself and others. One-day event includes raw organic catered lunch. Info/Registration: www.KaaylaVedder.com Rhodes Wellness College, Vancouver, 1-855-KAAYLAV.

DEC 14
Feria Cultural de Navidad: Musica, Mercado y Tapas Antojitos, Astorino's Hall, 1739 Venables St. 11AM-7PM. Info: Ana David, 604-593-2448.

JAN 10-11
"Unleash Your Gifts" Workshop: A 2-day journey of exploring and extending your hidden genius and passion. In Vancouver. Info/registration: www.planetbliss.ca

JAN 16-18
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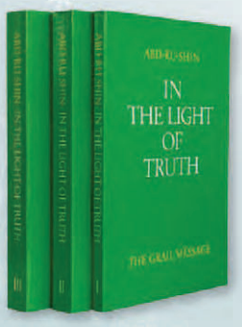

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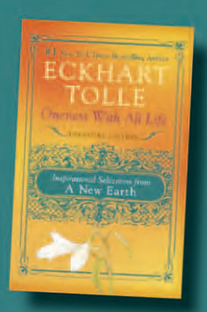

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David Suzuki's letter in support of his grandson Tamo, arrested at Kinder Morgan protest on Burnaby Mountain

Tamo Campos is my grandson and I am very proud of him. He is doing what I would have done myself were it not a risk to my position as host of The Nature of Things on CBC.

The world is on a collision course with the things that keep us alive and healthy - the air, water, soil and variety of life. Corporations, especially those with head offices in some other part of the country or the world care little for the interests of local ecosystems or communities, except in so far as they interfere with the drive to maximize profit for shareholders. They have no obligation to protect local ecosystems or local communities. Their sole goal is to make as much money as they can get away with.

All over the world, local citizens and communities are standing up to protect their ecological, social and economic interests against these invading entities that behave like thugs, intimidating with SLAPP suits and using every legal tool, anything to keep on their destructive path while avoiding the important issues like climate change and threat of spills being raised by protesters.

I say all this to set the action of Tamo and others in context. Tamo is fighting for the world that will be left to his generation in the future. I believe what Kinder Morgan and companies like it are doing is an intergenerational crime but there are no legal precedents to pursue criminal charges on that basis.

Before corporations had become so powerful, every generation aspired to leave a better future to their children. That is not on the corporate agenda. I beg you to consider the fact that there are few legal avenues to protest what I believe is criminal activity of corporations like Kinder Morgan so citizens are being forced to participate in civil disobedience. Are we so blinded by the power and influence of corporations that their short sighted agendas are above consideration of their potential of catastrophic ecological and social consequences?

My grandson is taking an active role in the struggle for human rights, social justice and environmental protection, he is not a criminal. He has done this without attempting to ride on or hide behind my coat tails. He is a role model for young people today, inspiring them to get involved in issues of their future. I hope the court will be cognizant of this.

David Suzuki, Emeritus professor, UBC